

quality data are used to: (1) assess compliance with water quality standards; (2) characterize stream quality and seasonal variations; (3) build a database for assessment of water quality trends; (4) identify streams for reporting to USEPA under Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act; (5) provide information to signatory states for 303(d) listing and possible Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development; and (6) identify areas for restoration and protection. Biological conditions are assessed using benthic macroinvertebrate populations, which provide an indication of the biological health of a stream and serve as indicators of water quality. Habitat assessments provide information concerning potential stream impairment from erosion and sedimentation, as well as an indication of the stream's ability to support a healthy biological community.

SRBC's interstate monitoring program began in April 1986. For the first five years, results were reported for water years that ran from October to September. In 1991, SRBC changed the reporting periods to correspond with its fiscal year that covers the period from July to June. This report is presented for fiscal year 2002, which covers July 1, 2001, to June 30, 2002.

BASIN GEOGRAPHY

The Susquehanna River Basin is the largest river basin on the Atlantic Coast of the United States, draining 27,510 square miles. The Susquehanna River originates at the outlet of Otsego Lake, Cooperstown, N.Y., and flows 444 miles through New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay at Havre de Grace, Maryland. Eighty-three streams cross state lines in the basin (Table 1). Several streams traverse the state lines at multiple points, contributing to 91 crossings. Of those 91 crossings, 45 streams flow from New York into Pennsylvania, 22 reaches cross from Pennsylvania into New York, 15 from Pennsylvania into Maryland, and nine from Maryland into Pennsylvania. Many streams are small, and 32 are unnamed.

METHODS

Field and Laboratory Methods

Sampling frequency

In Water Year 1989, the interstate streams were divided into three groups, according to the degree of water quality impairment, historical water quality impacts, and potential for degradation. These groupings were determined based on historical water quality and land use. To date, these groups remain consistent and are described below.

Streams with impaired water quality or judged to have a high potential for degradation due to large drainage areas or historical pollution were assigned to Group 1. Originally, water samples were collected from Group 1 stations every other month, except January and February. Sampling was alternated so that streams along the New York-Pennsylvania border were sampled during November, March, May, July, and September, while streams along the Pennsylvania-Maryland border were sampled during October, December, April, June, and August. During fiscal year 1997, water quality sampling of Group 1 streams was reduced to quarterly sampling. In this sampling period, 2001-2002, New York-Pennsylvania streams were sampled July, November, February, and April. Pennsylvania-Maryland stations were sampled July and August, November, February, and April. Benthic macroinvertebrates were collected and habitat assessments were performed in Group 1 streams during July and August 2001.

Streams judged to have a moderate potential for impacts were assigned to Group 2. Water quality samples, benthic macroinvertebrate samples, and physical habitat information were obtained from Group 2 stations once a year; preferably during base flow conditions in the summer months. In this sampling period, water chemistry, macroinvertebrate, and physical habitat information were collected during July and August 2001.